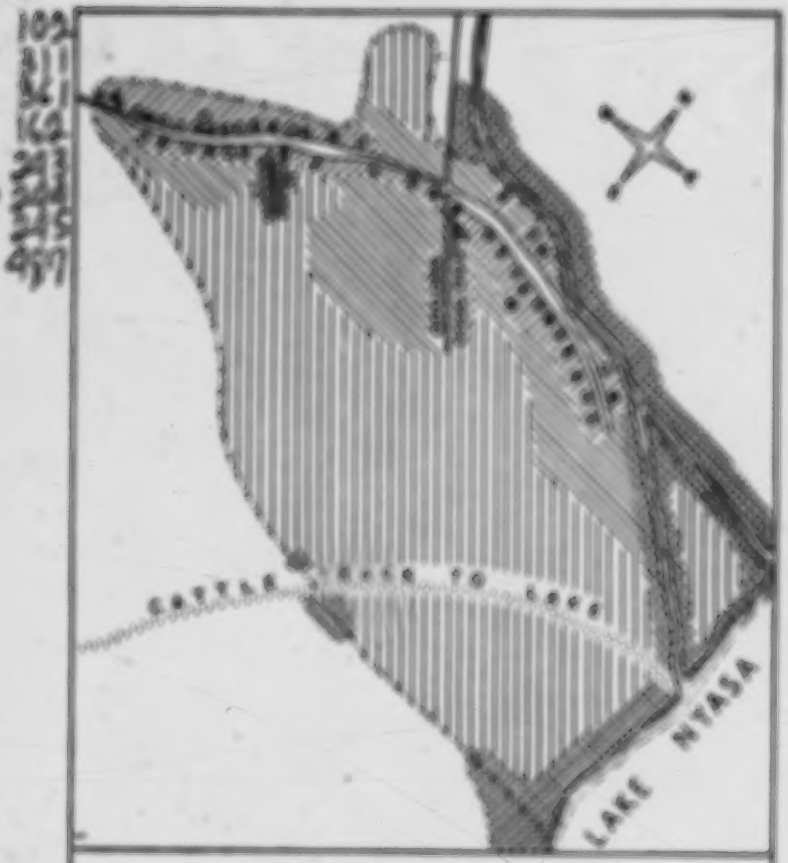

SKETCH PLAN OF KAPUGI VILLAGE
KOROSOS CHIEFDOM, 1955

[Facing p 29]

of the father. The old principle that every man had the right to enough land applied as well strongly to the young man, married or bachelors. Today most headmen will refuse to entertain the applications of young bachelors for land, and in the few merely represent general public opinion. But many young husbands likewise receive others land, or only an insufficient amount.

Consequently, the following case-history, which I recorded for one young man, is not unusual. In 1949 he lived in the Mbangati young men's location, attached to Mpangati village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, where his father lives. He was about 27 years old and had a wife and one child. Twice he had been to work in the mines and from the profits of this employment he had completed his bridewealth payment and had bought, in addition, three cattle, a bicycle and some good clothing. He thought he would probably go away again. Behind his house his wife had about 300 square yards of bananas and there was a tiny patch of cassava. This man had no other land, but he entered in the heavy labour on his father's holding (about 1.7 acres in all) and by family convention he normally took for his own use the paltry crop of a small strip there; he insisted, however, that he had not been given this strip outright and that it remained at his father's pleasure. His land adjoined half-brother about 22 years old who had not attained even that concession at the time. Their father was about 55 years old and had two other sons who were still boys. The young man himself had been refused an allocation of land by the headman on the grounds that (as the headman well knew) he had the use of his father's land, and also because, as the eldest son, he would be the principal heir on his father's death. He was clearly worried about his future, for he did not wish to go abroad again and leave his wife and child; but he did not see how he could stay at home without seriously lowering his standard of living to little above subsistence level.

I quote this brief case-history not necessarily as typical – though I think it probably is – but as an actual illustration of the process such as these as they affect an individual.

The Modern "Chief" and the Land

Most of the traditional chiefs, *abanyakyala*, have been recognised and selected under the Native Authority, and they are officially referred to today as *abatwe* (s. *mtwe*). Some of the smaller chiefdoms have been absorbed administratively by their larger neighbours, and, although they are still recognised by the people, their *abanyakyala* have lost very much of their earlier prestige and authority. In the Lake Plains the modern chiefdoms are often rather larger than is usual amongst the Nyakyusa,[1] but they are, of course, small in comparison with the size of most African chiefdoms in Tanganyika.

The slightness of the traditional authority of the chief in land matters has already been noted (pages 7-8) and in general this still holds. In European times, however, the recognised chiefs have been given an increased authority and prestige as the local intermediaries between Government and people, and until recent years they were almost the only local instruments of the Government amongst the Nyakyusa. They have been backed by the all-powerful Europeans, who preferred to deal with single, recognised individuals thought to have prime authority in a locality, and the European officer has been encouraged in this notion by an over-enthusiastic policy of indirect rule. Such chiefs were able to assume a degree of power well beyond the traditional limits, and to aggrandise themselves thereby. The ordinary commoner was never quite sure how far his chief was individually claiming more than he

1. On the numerical size of chiefdoms see supra, page 6.

[illegible]

[illegible] Bananas and plantains are grown all over the district except in the highlands to the north and west. Numerous local varieties abound, with a few plantains and the future variety of bananas as recent introductions, and are used exclusively for food, no beer being made. They are usually dried and provided with pests and scarce to be used as flour, although they are also eaten whole after cooking.

[illegible] Sweet potatoes are extensively grown. They are planted on ridges from 3-4 feet high. Planting distances vary from 6 inches to 1 foot in either direction. They are planted in March to May and yields of 7 tubers take eight months to mature, but yields of that plant four months is sufficient. Sweet potatoes are eaten boiled or roasted.

[illegible] Finger millet is used more for beer-making than for food. It is always sown broadcast in November to January and harvested in March to May. The seed is first hand-hoed and all grass put into heaps and burnt when dry. In the highlands to the west the trees are lopped and branches piled in heaps to be burnt. Low-curved ridges are put up at intervals depending on the slope of the land. The harvesting is carried out just before the grain is ripe by cutting off the heads and stacking in the field while ripening proceeds. The heads are then collected into large baskets and steeped in water for a day, after which they are taken out and rubbed with the hands to separate the grain from the chaff. The millet is then dried and stored in earthenware pots or mud-covered baskets until required. It is reported that it can be stored for five or six years by this method, but I have not verified this personally.

[illegible] Beans are nearly always interplanted with maize or sown in banana plantations and the local seed is of mixed varieties. They are often boiled as a relish with other food such as maize. The leaves are also eaten dried or fresh.

[illegible] Groundnuts are grown in the medium and lower altitudes. Planted in November to February and harvested in April to July, they are dried in the shell and eaten raw.

[illegible] Rice is grown on the lake shore and also in the neighbouring foothills. It is sown broadcast in November to February and harvested in May to August. Yields are fair high in the foothills, being about 6-7 bags of paddy to the acre. Many local varieties are grown, such as Mwedri, Mwangulo, and Marula. The hill rice is often boiled, but most is sold hundulled in the markets for purely local consumption.